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NOTES ON GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Reptilia, Squamata, Serpentes, *Lygophis paucidens* Hoge, 1952: First records for Paraguay

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ABSTRACT: The first Paraguayan records of the poorly known xenodontine snake *Lygophis paucidens* are reported. Two male specimens were collected in a mosaic habitat of *Campo Sucio* and *Cerrado sensu stricto* in the Reserva Natural Laguna Blanca, Departamento San Pedro. This is the first record of this species outside of Brazil.

Lygophis paucidens Hoge, 1952 is a poorly known xenodontine snake associated with Caatinga/Cerrado habitats in east-central Brazil (Michaud and Dixon 1987; Nogueira 2001; Tipton 2005; Valdujo *et al*. 2009). The species was originally described from Mato Verde, Mato Grosso, Brazil (Hoge 1952), but despite very few specimens the distribution appears to be wide, with further documented records from the Brazilian States of Piauí, Pernambuco, Paraíba, Goiás, and Distrito Federal (Tipton 2005; Valdujo *et al*. 2009). However records from Cerrado are few and by 2001 the species was known from just 10 specimens in six Brazilian Cerrado localities in the states of Goiás and Distrito Federal (Nogueira 2001; Tipton 2005), with an additional record from Goiás later published by Valdujo *et al*. (2009).

Lygophis paucidens can be distinguished from related taxa such as *L. dilepis* by the presence of dark longitudinal lines only on the anterior part of the body, which abruptly fade a short distance behind the head. Published scale counts for this species are: ventrals 166–174; subcaudals 62–72; and 17-17-15 dorsal scale rows (Lema 1989). Because of its rarity, little is known about the biology of *L. paucidens*. The only published ecological information on the species is a comment by Michaud and Dixon (1989) that *L. paucidens* feeds on small teiid lizards of the genus *Cnemidophorus*, which are widespread and generally common throughout Caatinga and Cerrado (Colli *et al*. 2002).

In this note we report on two specimens of *L. paucidens* from Cerrado habitat at Reserva Natural Laguna Blanca (RNLB), Departamento San Pedro, Paraguay (Figure 1) (23º47'56"S, 56º17'32"W), which represent the first record for the country and the first report of this species outside Brazil.

The RNLB is an 804 hectare reserve consisting of over 400 hectares of near pristine Cerrado, a patch of degraded Atlantic Forest and areas of transitional semi-deciduous, semi-humid forest. The four main Cerrado ecotypes are present at RNLB and grow on a predominately sandy substrate (Eiten 1972, 1978). The RNLB was declared a Natural Reserve on 3 February 2010 for a limited period of just five years (Decree 3893 under Article 26 of the Protected Areas Law 352/94).

The following specimens were collected by fieldworkers from Estación Biologica Para La Tierra (PLT), based at RNLB and are deposited in Para La Tierra Biological Station collection (CZPLT) located at the reserve. Both specimens were collected in a mosaic of Campo Sucio and *sensu stricto* Cerrado vegetation types within the reserve (*sensu* Eiten, 1972, 1978).

The specimen CZPLT-H-122 (March 15, 2011) is male, collected in a pitfall trap (Figures 2 and 3). Measurements: total length 401.5 mm, snout-vent length 350.0 mm, dorsal scale rows 17-17-15, ventrals 165, subcaudals 66. The

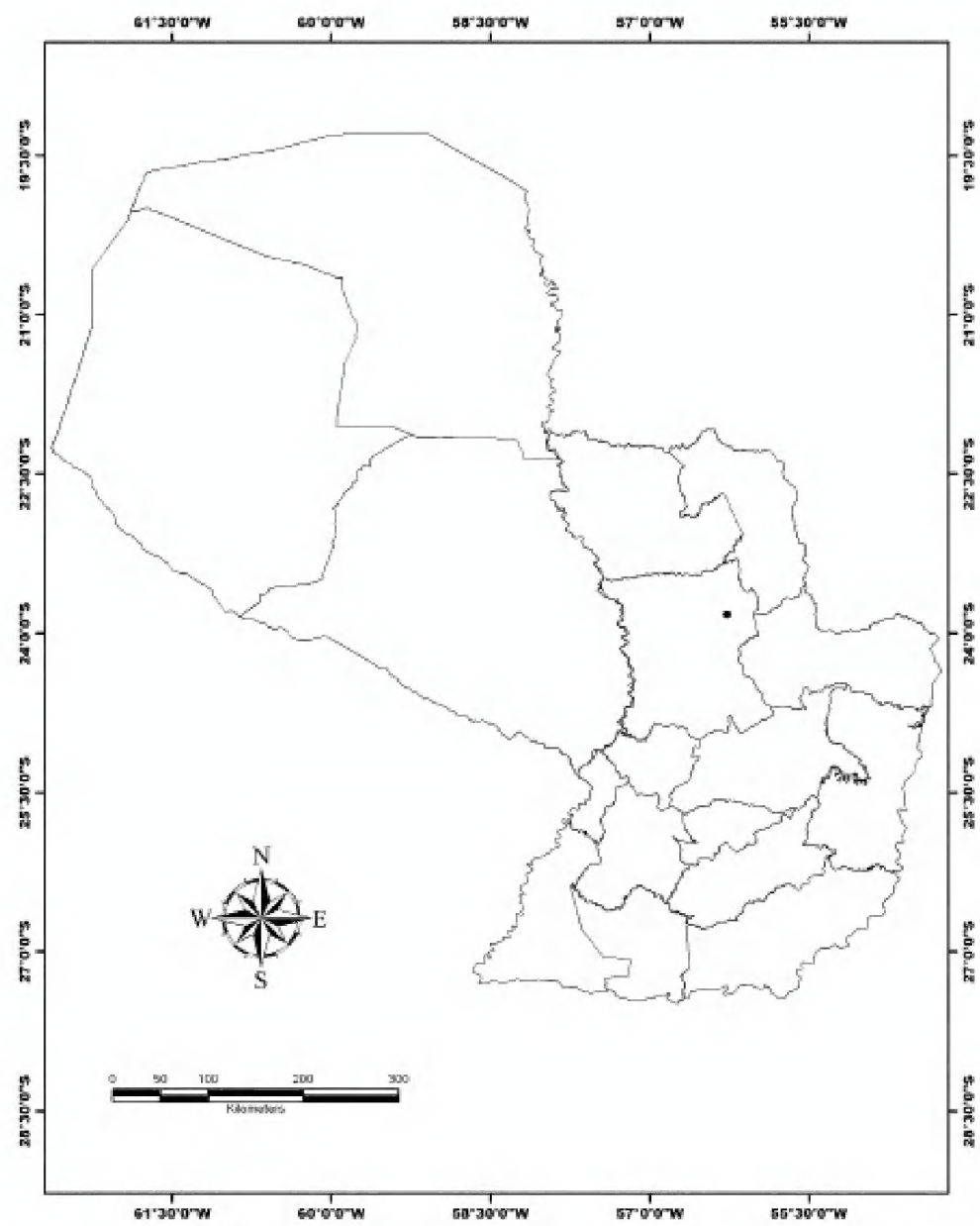

FIGURE 1. Map showing the locality record of *Lygophis paucidens* in Paraguay.

ventral scale count of this specimen extends the lower limit of the known range for the species.

The specimen CZPLT-H-144 (May 2, 2011) is also male and was collected under a metal Sherman trap on a cold morning. Measurements: total length 390.0 mm, snout-vent length 290.5 mm, dorsal scale rows 17-17-15, ventrals 167, subcaudals 63.

The records reported here represent a range extension of more than 320 Km SW from the closest published locality Assentamento Nascentes do Araguaia, Goiás State (Valdujo *et al*. 2009) and confirm a wider distribution of *L. paucidens* throughout the Cerrado region.

Though small, the importance of the RNLB for conservation in Paraguay should not be underestimated. With over 400 hectares of globally threatened, pristine Cerrado habitat, plus an artesian lake arising from the Guarani Aquifer, the reserve is of both national and international importance. It was declared an Important Bird Area by Birdlife International (IBA PY021- Guyra Paraguay 2008) due to the extraordinarily high number of globally (11) and nationally (47) threatened bird species occurring within the reserve. Indications from ongoing herpetological inventories suggest that it is also an area of national and international importance for the conservation of reptiles and amphibians, given that despite its small size it boasts the highest amphibian and reptile species lists of any protected area in Paraguay (Smith *et al*. 2012, Para La Tierra unpublished data). Consolidating the long term conservation of the RNLB should be a national conservation priority.

Figure 2. Specimen of *Lygophis paucidens* (CZPLT-H-122) found at Reserva Natural Laguna Blanca, in San Pedro Department, Paraguay.

Figure 3. Detail of the head of *L. paucidens* (CZPLT-H-122).

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